

2014 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey

Facts about Teens and Marijuana

Background: In the fall of 2014, 223,000 students in grades 6, 8, 10 and 12 participated in the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey (HYS). About 1,000 schools enrolled in the survey, representing all 39 Washington counties and 215 school districts. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is one of four state agencies supporting the HYS to provide data for state and local prevention planning.

What did students report about marijuana use in the past month?

Most students do not use marijuana. While alcohol and other drug use has gone down significantly, marijuana use is unchanged:

- 8th grade - seven percent, compared to nine percent in 2010
- 10th grade - one in five (18 percent), compared to 20 percent in 2010
- 12th grade - one in four (27 percent), compared to 26 percent in 2010

What are the most common ways students use marijuana?

Most students who use marijuana smoke it. The second most common method is to eat it. Between five and seven percent of students use a vaporizer:

- 8th grade: 66 percent smoke it - 15 percent eat it
- 10th grade: 66 percent smoke it - 15 percent eat it
- 12th grade: 74 percent smoke it - 12 percent eat it

How many students think it is risky to use marijuana?¹

Significantly fewer students in grades 8, 10 and 12 said there is great risk in using marijuana regularly (once or twice a week):

- 10th grade: 36 percent – down from 46 percent in 2012
- 12th grade: 26 percent – down from 34 percent in 2012

How many students believe it is easy to get marijuana?

- 8th grade: 21 percent – down from 25 percent in 2012
- 10th grade: 53 percent – up from 51 percent in 2012
- 12th grade: 66 percent – no change from 2012

Would parents/adults think it's wrong for them to use marijuana?¹

Compared to 2012, slightly more students said adults would not think it is wrong for them to use:

- 8th grade – four percent
- 10th grade – 11 percent
- 12th grade – 17 percent

What did students report about using marijuana and driving?

One in five 10th graders, and one in four 12th graders reported riding in a car in the past month with a driver who had used marijuana. The number of students who reported driving in the past month within three hours after using marijuana:

- 10th grade – One in 10 (9 percent)
- 12th grade - One in six (17 percent)

¹ In 2014 the question changed from smoke marijuana to use marijuana.

What are other risks when teens use marijuana regularly?

Because the teen brain is still developing, teens are at increased risk from marijuana and other drug use compared to those age 21 and older. National data identifies the following risks:

- Poor grades and not graduating, due to problems with memory and concentration
- Serious injuries and death from driving under the influence
- Unwanted and unplanned sexual activity
- Addiction
- Depression and anxiety with long term use

What increases the risk that teens will use marijuana?

- A low perception of harm.
- Friends who use.
- The belief that it is readily available and easy to get.
- Parents/adults who have favorable attitudes toward drug use.
- Community laws and attitudes favorable towards drug use.

What can parents and other adults do to help teens avoid drug use and its negative consequences?

- Talk with your children early and often about the risks of using marijuana and other drugs. 65 percent of 8th graders, and 61 percent of 10th graders reported talks about marijuana with parents or guardians in 2014.
- Parents are the number one influence on their children's decisions about marijuana and other drugs – get tips for talking with teens at www.StartTalkingNow.org.
- Monitor them. Know where your teens are and who they are with.
- Bond with them: love them unconditionally, let teens know you value them, and stay involved in their lives.
- Help teens to act independently and resist peer pressure.
- Set clear rules against using marijuana, and enforce logical consequences.
- Get help if you see warning signs. Call the Washington State Recovery Help Line for free emotional support and referrals to treatment: 1-866-789-1511 or Teenline: 1-866-833-6546.

What DSHS is doing to promote healthier youth and communities

DSHS is nationally recognized as a leader in supporting evidence-based prevention practices and collaborating with community-based prevention organizations. DSHS provides funding, training and oversight to communities to prevent, reduce and treat substance use disorders, promote mental health, and increase healthy community norms. DSHS also supports statewide initiatives to increase public knowledge about drug prevention and mental health.

For other Healthy Youth Survey fact sheets, visit www.AskHYS.net. For more information about DSHS-funded prevention services, email Sarah.Mariani@dshs.wa.gov.